

REMARKS

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1, 3-19, 21-25, 32, 33, 37 and 38 are presented for consideration. Claims 1, 18, 21, 24, 25 and 37 are independent. Claim 37 has been amended to clarify features of the subject invention. Support for these changes can be found in the original application, as filed.

Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Applicant notes with appreciation that claims 1, 3-9, 21-25, 32 and 33 have been indicated as being allowable over the art of record. In addition to these claims being allowable, Applicant submits that claims 37 and 38 likewise patentably define features of the subject invention. In this regard, Applicant notes with appreciation the courtesies extended by Examiner Nguyen in considering a proposed claim amendment, which was submitted on May 21, 2004, to propose certain amendments to claim 37. Applicant also notes with appreciation that the Examiner tentatively indicated that these proposed changes would patentably define the invention over U.S. Patent No. 5,559,584 to Miyaji et al.

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

Claims 37 and 38 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being clearly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,559,584 to Miyaji et al. Applicant submits that the cited art does not teach many features of the present invention as previously recited in claims independent claim 37. Therefore, this rejection is respectfully traversed. Nevertheless, Applicant submits that

independent claim 37, as presented, amplifies the distinctions between the present invention and the cited art.

In one aspect of the present invention, independent claim 37 recites an exposure apparatus for exposing a substrate using a plurality of masters. The apparatus includes a stage being able to install at least one of the plurality of masters, a stage housing surrounding the stage, which is filled by a first atmosphere, a stocker for stocking at least one of the plurality of masters under the first atmosphere, and a load-lock chamber being allowed to communicate with both an inside space and an outside space of the stage housing, and being able to exchange an interior atmosphere of the load-lock chamber to an atmosphere being substantially equal to the first atmosphere and an atmosphere of the outside space of the stage housing. The load-lock chamber is different from the stage housing, the first atmosphere is an inert gas atmosphere or a vacuum atmosphere, and the stage housing is positioned between the load-lock chamber and the stocker.

Applicant submits that the cited art does not teach or suggest such features of the present invention, as recited in independent claim 37.

The Miyaji et al. patent shows, in Figure 5, a chamber 13, a chamber 12 and a chamber 1. The chamber 13, the chamber 12 and the chamber 1 might be considered to correspond to the stocker, the load-lock chamber and the stage housing of the present invention recited in independent claim 37. The Examiner will note, however, that the chamber 1 in the Miyaji et al. patent, corresponding to stage housing, is not positioned between the chamber 12, corresponding to the load-lock chamber, and the chamber 13, corresponding to the stocker, in the manner of the present invention recited in independent claim 37. Accordingly, the layout the of the three units

disclosed in the Miyaji et al. patent is entirely different from the layout of the three units of the present invention recited in independent claim 37.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that the present invention, as recited in independent claim 37, also is patentably defined over the cited art.

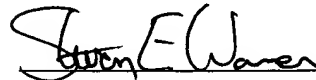
Dependent claim 38 also should be deemed allowable, in its own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in independent claim 37. Further individual consideration of this dependent claim is requested.

Applicant further submits that this Amendment After Final Rejection clearly places this application in condition for allowance. This Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicant believed that the prior Amendment placed the application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of the instant Amendment, as an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, is requested under 37 CFR 1.116.

Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejection set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance are also requested.

Applicant's attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at
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Respectfully submitted,



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